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# ACHIEVING AN ETHNICALLY AND RACIALLY DIVERSE STUDENT POPULATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

BY CHRISTIE CURTIS AND ALEXANDER JUN

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## ABSTRACT

Leaders in higher education continue to pursue the lofty goal of diversifying their college and university environments. Although improvements are evident in larger percentages of racially and ethnically diverse students and faculty on campuses, college and university leaders have much work left to do. The benefits associated with diversifying higher education environments have yet to be fully achieved. This article provides an overview of the diversity issue and identifies its importance not only to the welfare of those invested in higher education but also to the health and well-being of all people groups, nationally and globally. To illuminate the current condition of diversity, this paper includes an examination of past and present key policies and laws. To address and analyze the diversity problem, this exam presents existing research. Finally, this paper concludes with suggestions for embracing and affirming difference in college populations that leads to achieving the benefits of diversity for higher education institutions and society.

Although higher education leaders can point at the admission of more racially and ethnically diverse student bodies as evidence that ethnic and racial diversity is being accomplished on college campuses, university administrators have yet to achieve the best possible educational environment for students. When institutions provide a “microcosm of the equitable and democratic society” for which many citizens of the United States strive, then university leaders may acknowledge some success (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002, p. 362). College and university leaders must do more than justify ethnic diversity and support its link to educational outcomes. The challenge facing higher education leaders is to “achieve the benefits of diversity for [their] institutions and for society” (Smith, 2009, p. vii) by increasing their efforts to attract, retain, and graduate ethnically and racially diverse college students.

## DIVERSITY PROBLEM

Public and private higher education institutions alike are increasing their efforts to diversify their student populations. Research data show that the overall percentage of ethnically and racially diverse students has increased from 16.6 percent in 2003 to 19.9 percent in 2009 in private schools. For public schools, the rate of diversity increased from 20.5 percent in 2003 to 23.2 percent in 2009 (CCCU News, 2011). Higher education leaders acknowledge some success in diversifying their student populations; however, college and universities administrators admit that the increases in the overall percentage of students of color do not reflect the demographic shifts that are occurring across the Nation.

### Overview of the Problem

Many college and university leaders across the Nation articulate diversifying their campus populations as one of their priorities. Some higher education institutions, such as the University of California at Santa Barbara (UCSB), have been successful at this endeavor. In the 1970s and 1980s, UCSB was known as one of the “whitest campuses” in the UC system. In the 1990s and 2000s, UCSB has reported enough significant growth in its proportion of underrepresented minority students that the Quality of Education for Minorities (QEM) has recognized the institution (Castro, Fenstermaker, Mohr, & Guckenheimer, 2009, p. 210).

Other higher institutions share the same goals as UCSB; however, these colleges and universities have not been nearly as successful at diversifying their campus communities. To benefit both their universities and society, higher education leaders must increase their efforts to achieve a more diverse student body.

### Diversity as a Critical Issue

The population of most college and university campuses does not reflect the color and texture of their surrounding communities. This situation underscores the limited access that students of color have to a higher education and the white privilege that continues to be exercised on higher education institutions today.

**Rationale for diverse student population.** Because college and universities acknowledge that their campus populations have not reached an optimal representation of ethnic diversity, and that a diverse campus community benefits everyone, exploring possible options to improve the percentage of students of color justifies the endeavor. Higher education institutions can become “more vital to the health and well-being of their communities and to the issues that challenge society as a whole” (Smith, 2009, p. xii) by implementing initiatives that encourage an ethnically and racially diverse student population. Because a robust body of knowledge from research links diversity to cultivation of citizens who are successful in a pluralistic society, higher education leaders must embrace and weave diversity into the institution’s very core if they are to achieve the central goals of higher education (Smith).

### **Evidence of Disparity in Student Diversity**

According to Largo (2005), two government reports (“School Enrollment -- Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 2003” and “The Condition of Education 2005”) claimed major gains in the number of ethnically and racially diverse students enrolled in higher education institutions. Largo agrees that there have been gains in minority enrollments; however, he emphasizes that there have been larger gains in the enrollment of majority students. Largo suggests: “The uncritical reporting by *The Chronicle* of the facile interpretation of these enrollment statistics contributes to the national denial of the urgent need to publicly address racial inequality in access to higher education” (p. A35).

Largo (2005) identifies two critical elements that are not acknowledged in these reports. First, for several decades, the birthrates of the majority population have decreased in comparison to minority birthrates and immigration of young people from minority groups. Despite this decline as a proportion of the population, the number of white students enrolled in higher education institutions has still increased. “Majority students have made greater relative gains than minority students, the exact opposite of the conclusion based simply on enrollment statistics” (p. A35). Second, to accurately interpret the statistical enrollment figures, racial enrollment need to be broken down by institutional characteristics. Largo emphasizes that an examination of institutional characteristics reveals that minority students are “disproportionately enrolled in historically black institutions, institutions in Puerto Rico, and second-tier urban institutions, while white students are disproportionately enrolled in higher-quality institutions in the suburbs” (p. A35). These statistics expose massive geographic and institutional racial segregation in higher education.

### **Evidence of Potential Problems**

A number of issues underscore the urgency of diversity and the problems it poses for higher education institutions. Without the adoption of diversity initiatives that address the needs of all diverse students, negative social, educational, political, and economic consequences will result.

**Social threat.** Students must learn how to interact with and understand people who are ethnically, racially, and culturally different from themselves. “The United States and the world are becoming increasingly more diverse, compact, and interdependent” (Gay, 1994, p. 18). The formative years for most students are ethnically and culturally isolated and do not adequately prepare them to function effectively in ethnically different and multicultural settings” (Gay).

**Educational threat.** Research studies have found that an ethnically diverse campus community benefits every student, regardless of his or her skin color. There are many positive outcomes of diversifying the campus population, but the following outcomes directly benefit the students: critical thinking skills are sharpened; creativity is stimulated; and reflection time on inner thoughts is increased (Diaz, 2011). For these outcomes alone, higher education leaders must continue their efforts to increase the proportion of ethnically and racially diverse students.

**Political threat.** Diversity gains more urgency because of its importance nationally and globally. Very few successful examples exist of diversified societies; therefore, American higher education institutions are offered the challenge of becoming “models of diverse institutions that function well” (Smith, 2009, p. 4). Colleges and universities can contribute to creating “a world lived in common’ rather than a world lived in chaos and hate” (Knefelkamp & Schneider, as cited in Smith).

**Economic threat.** Around the world and in the United States, diversity plays a part in the “themes of economic and other inequities, racism, and historic and continuing injustice” (Smith 2009, p. 5). For example, poverty and race are impossible to untangle in America, and poor citizens increasingly view their economic status as proof of “structural or institutional racism” (Hollinger, 1995, p. 168). In higher education, the economic inequity found among potential students of color makes the affordability of a college degree an insurmountable barrier.

Assisting these economically challenged diverse students presents another problem facing higher education leaders and other invested parties if the benefits of diversity for their institutions and society as a whole are to be realized.

### **AUTHENTICITY OF PROBLEM**

As concerned individuals assess the state of society in the United States, they point at these indicators of poor health: “the embedded aspects of society that disadvantage some groups and advantage others (structural inequity), poverty, and uneven access to power” (Smith, 2009, p. 8). If one adds the inequities in housing, banking, and employment to race, ethnicity, and gender, the result suggests an unhealthy democracy in America. Yet, people around the world continue to hope that the United States, the most racially and ethnically diverse country in existence, will “demonstrate both the power of diversity and the possibility of developing a pluralistic society that works” (p. 10).

Most research supports diversity “as essential to the organization for the variety of perspectives and contributions that can be made: The outcomes are much more positive than when diversity exists simply to increase representation or to gain legitimacy in outside communities” (Smith, 2009, p. 16). Smith suggests: “Engaging diversity, building diversity, and taking diversity seriously are imperative for organizations” (Smith). Critics of higher education institutions challenge colleges and universities to become role models of diverse organizations that can effectively fulfill their mission of producing citizens who are successful in a pluralistic society.

### **Diversity: Its Historical and Current Impact**

Most discussions about diversity begin with the early stages of the Civil Rights Movement and issues of access to higher education. The earliest attempts toward diversity began before the 1960s. These initial diversity efforts focused on opening doors to those who were excluded by law from educational institutions (Smith, 2009). Blacks were not the only people excluded from colleges and universities; access to higher education was denied to Chicanos, Asian Americans, and American Indians as well. Chicano and Asian groups were fighting hard against segregation, especially on the West Coast, as is evidenced in the landmark desegregation case, *Mendez v. Westminster* (1947). This case involving Chicanos on the West Coast is often overlooked, but it provided a precedent for the historic Brown case seven years later (Smith, 2009). The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision made many colleges and universities question whether diversity was a legitimate educational goal in college admissions (Clark, 2004). According to Clark, “*Brown* pushed open the doors of opportunity for citizenship and democratic rights that helped launch the Black social and political movements of the 1950s, ‘60s, and ‘70s. It helped facilitate a sense of pride and unity among minority groups. We knew we had a right to be in college and to be treated with dignity” (para. 5).

### **Key Policies and Laws**

Despite the efforts of other groups for equal access to higher education, much of the early diversity work is centered on the civil rights movement in the South. This movement primarily represented White women and African Americans. The

1960s were a time of unrest and struggle for these underrepresented minorities and White women, and led to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This act along with other executive orders for affirmative action focused “on ensuring access to higher education for historically underrepresented minorities (African Americans, Latinos, and American Indians) and for White women in fields in which they were underrepresented” (Smith, 2009, 52).

### **Ameliorative Attempts**

Higher education was pushed by other legal and legislative mandates to make changes. In 1965, the Higher Education Act established need-based financial aid for the first time. The act created TRIO early-intervention programs to encourage underrepresented minorities and low-income students. In 1972, Pell Grants opened access to higher education to people of all classes, and also in 1972, Title IX mandated access for women in athletics. Even people with disabilities received assistance: The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 mandated access and accommodations for people with disabilities.

The 1960s and 1970s aspired to remedy the inequities of exclusion by opening the doors to higher education. However, concern quickly shifted from access to success. In the 1970s and the 1980s, conversations around diversity highlighted the institution and the ways in which colleges and universities were unprepared to educate students of color for success.

In the 1978 case *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, U. S. Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell decided that the educational benefits of diversity support affirmative action. Since the *Bakke* decision, however, courts across the country have produced conflicting rulings on diversity. Controversy surrounds admissions, and many question whether *Bakke* is still a good law (Smith, 2009).

## **A DIVERSITY FRAMEWORK**

Initially, diversity was framed around the issues of access, student success, campus climate, curriculum, scholarly research, and hiring. Diversity was often reactive, focused on responding to events and being implemented primarily to serve specific populations. Today, higher education institutions are embracing diversity as central to their missions by building an inclusive institutional culture. Race, ethnicity, class, and gender continue to frame diversity. However, class has moved beyond income and now includes cultural norms and values. The intersections of gender, class, and race have become more significant. Campus climate has caused academic leaders to re-evaluate their curricular offerings so that contemporary societal issues are addressed. Finally, the increase in immigration, concern about undocumented immigrant students, overlap between domestic and international diversity concerns, multiplicity and intersectionality of identities, and educational benefits linked to diversity are now included in framing the diversity issue (Smith, 2009).

### **Different Theoretical Perspectives**

Smith’s (2009) framework offers only one perspective to explain the issue of diversity. Some researchers identify the lack of support of friends and family as the underlying reason for insufficient numbers of ethnically and racially diverse students. Other researchers present frameworks emphasizing student characteristics and behaviors, such as student effort and expectations, as the explanation of diversity. Still other studies suggest that the affordability of pursuing a higher education degree is the explanation for the less than optimum percentages of ethnically and racially diverse students (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayak, 2006).

Identity theorists suggest that the cause for the low number of ethnically and racially diverse students is the growing complexity in identities and diversities. Higher education institutions are struggling to meet the needs of all diverse students. When administrators consider the differences in history, culture, and experiences within each people group, then “homogenous notions of identity . . . quickly break down” (Smith, 2009, p. 5).

Critical theorists hold still another perspective: Lack of diversity on college campuses exposes “how economics, capital, and the market drive social progress and processes” (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006, p. 21) in higher

education institutions. The critical race component of this theory challenges traditional societal norms and exposes how social processes privilege certain groups in society, especially as these processes relate to educational opportunity.

### **Smith's Dimensions of Diversity**

The framework chosen to analyze and address the diversity problem shifts the focus from groups to the institution (Smith, 2009). Smith's framework includes the entire spectrum of identities yet differentiates the concerns related to each. The four dimensions are access and success of underrepresented student population, campus climate and intergroup relations, education and scholarship, and institutional viability and vitality. These four dimensions provide a way to understand an institution's capacity for diversity and to visualize how that might appear.

### **Addressing the Diversity Problem**

**Institutional viability and vitality.** For diversity to be successful, higher education institutions must identify diversity centrally with the institution. The institution must have the people, resources, and expertise to build the institution's capacity and structures for diversity. How well diverse populations thrive and succeed determines the institution's health. When committed leaders evaluate how effectively the mission facilitates the process of embedding diversity more centrally, they can strategize ways to develop the institutional capacity to succeed. Administrators must analyze the culture to determine what should remain and what should change in order for people from all backgrounds to thrive. For building institutional capital for diversity, there is a need for competent staff, administration, faculty, and leadership. To determine the centrality of diversity in core institutional processes, these documents can be examined: strategic plans, board reports, accreditation documents, and proposals. Even the morale of minority people can reveal an institution's commitment to diversity and equity (Smith, 2009).

**Education and scholarship.** The second dimension of this diversity framework describes the academic core of the institution. Framing diversity in academic and educational terms is crucial for the involvement of faculty and for placing diversity in the center of institutional concerns. Higher education administrators should encourage opportunities for faculty to "engage diversity deeply through their own scholarship and/or teaching" (Smith, 2009, p. 73). Getting faculty involved in "leading curriculum-transformation efforts, undertaking new scholarly initiatives, and transforming the hiring process for faculty" are ways to move diversity to the center of institutional missions (Smith). This dimension examines the educational experiences of all students and the scholarly focus of the institution.

**Campus climate.** The third dimension of this diversity framework examines the perceptions of individuals about their institutions. Research findings report campus climate as being a significant indicator of morale, satisfaction, and effectiveness. The climate and interaction-relations dimension examines the degree of interaction between diverse groups of students, faculty, and staff. Intergroup relations have gained urgency because of their ability to build institutional capacity for diversity. With increasing demographic diversity has come encouragement to dialogue among groups.

**Access and success.** The final dimension addresses the access and success of historically underrepresented students. This was historically the first dimension and represents the heart and soul of diversity in higher education. Initially, this dimension focused on African Americans, Latinos, American Indians, and White women. Unfortunately, the problems addressed in literature 40 years ago are the same ones that are addressed in literature today. Granted, there has been some progress, but issues of access and success still remain. The achievement gap has not narrowed significantly, and diversity in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) has not been achieved (Smith, 2009). Bensimon (2004) adds that diversity on college campuses is more than what spectators "see." The student population may "look" diverse, but "looking" cannot reveal student success, campus climate, institutional effectiveness, graduate-student welfare, or faculty profiles. A visible demographically diverse student population reveals nothing about whether the students are thriving and succeeding.

## **Strengths**

The interconnection of the four dimensions of Smith's framework is one of its strengths. This interconnection provides an inclusive approach to diversity while still differentiating those aspects of diversity that need to be addressed specifically. The campus climate dimension questions how individuals perceive the institution; the curriculum dimension evaluates the curricular exposure to the experiences of all peoples and illustrates how new forms of scholarship can impact academic disciplines; the student success dimension reflects the institution's commitment to intergroup relations and climate; and, the institutional dimension attends to faculty, staff, and administrative hiring and retention revealed in its focus on racial, ethnic, and gender diversity as well the climate and organizational culture (Smith, 2009).

## **CHALLENGES**

Critics of Smith's framework articulate a need for determining diversity success in each dimension. Perez (2011) suggests that the indicators of success in the institutional viability and vitality dimension could be these: the institutional history of diversity issues and incidents, the institutional strategies and dedicated resources, the compositional diversity of the faculty and the staff, and the framework for monitoring diversity with indicators. Educator and scholarship success indicators could be the course-taking patterns of students, the level of faculty expertise on diversity-related matters, and the quantity and substance of student learning about diversity. The effects of diversity on the campus climate could be measured by the type and quality of student group interaction, the students' commitment to institutional goals, and the students' quality of experience and engagement on campus. Finally, access and success indicators of diversity progress could be the undergraduate and graduate population by field and levels, the students' success (graduation, performance, persistence, honors), and the students' pursuit of advanced degrees (Perez).

## **Revised Framework**

To determine the institution's success at centralizing diversity in its mission, those in higher leadership could adopt a framework that reflects on the strengths and weaknesses that exist on their campuses and use this knowledge to improve the quality of their education. This framework could appraise educational effectiveness by disaggregating student access and success. This disaggregation would connect diversity to education in a very central way (Smith, 2009). To evaluate the governing structures and financial state of college and universities, this framework could examine the institution's ability to begin new educational and scholarly programs. To determine if an institution is fulfilling its mission of educating students to thrive in a diverse society, this framework could identify paralleling programs as evidence. To decide if an institution's mission is truly to address societal and educational issues, then this framework could rate its capacity to bring together diverse groups of people for evaluative conversation on diversity, for engagement of multiple perspectives, and for formulating strategic initiatives as proof of its commitment to diversity. Finally, to ensure that changes for improvement in educational effectiveness are being made, this framework could examine the willingness of organizational leadership to accept feedback from people who are invested in the institution about the successes and the failures of its efforts to address diversity.

Any higher education institution can take a strategic approach to diversity. Three elements are critical for engaging diversity effectively and reflect the influence of critical theory: (a) the context and background for diversity must be established; (b) the framework for monitoring progress must be developed; and, (c) the time and place for reporting and sharing information about progress and changes must be determined. If this type of framework is developed by higher education leaders, then there is a much greater chance that institutional efforts to create change will be sustainable (Smith, 2009).

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

After analyzing the historical past of higher education leaders' attempts to diversify their student populations, concerned individuals can draw two conclusions: the domain of diversity is expanding and deepening, and higher education leaders have much work remaining. Smith (2009) suggests that administrative leaders focus their efforts on diversifying faculties and on addressing "identity in diversity and all of its complexities" (p. 178). This intentional focus will "embrace and affirm difference for students" and "create an environment that is intentional about learning and interaction across different communities" (A. Jun, HED 7 syllabus, July 25, 2011).

### Embracing and Affirming Difference

In order to encourage institutional capacity for diversity, higher education administrators must diversify their leadership. This need for diversity in leadership has become a critical issue for college and university campuses and must be addressed. Granted, some attempts at diversifying leadership have been successful, but even more focus must be directed on hiring a faculty that is representative racially and ethnically. Research findings suggest that there is a direct link between increasing the diversity of the student population and the need for diversifying the faculty (Smith, 2009). This link provides the *primary* rationale for increasing the diversity of faculty: to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of the student population.

Smith (2009) justifies the need for a diverse faculty by emphasizing its importance to students and their success. As the diversity of a student body increases, the students' search for an advisor or mentor from a similar background intensifies. Furthermore, a more diverse faculty provides a more diverse student body with "visible models" of possibilities in terms of career (p. 138). In addition, diverse faculty are more likely to be viewed as individuals rather than as stereotypes if there are more opportunities for students to interact with a greater number of diverse faculty members.

Offering mentors with similar backgrounds, providing visible models of career options, and orchestrating opportunities for students to interact with diverse faculty as individuals benefit the students. However, not only students but also higher education institutions benefit from a diverse faculty. First, a diverse faculty prevents accusations of hypocrisy and insincerity. Smith emphasizes "[S]uccess in diversifying the faculty goes to the heart of whether an institution is seen as committed to equity and diversity" (Smith, 2009, p. 140). Second, diverse forms of knowledge can be attributed to the diversity in the faculty. Numerous studies credit underrepresented faculty and White women with "bringing diversity themes to scholarship, increasing diversity in the curriculum, and introducing more and different patterns of pedagogy, including increasing the engagement of students in the community" (p. 140). Third, faculty diversity encourages the development of meaningful relationships with diverse communities outside the campus. Fourth, a diverse faculty makes fully informed decisions possible at all levels. Smith comments: "[D]iversity is essential for the expertise, excellence, and perspective required at the institutional and departmental levels. When key decision-making bodies include members of a diverse faculty, then the power associated with leadership becomes shared.

A diverse faculty benefits institutions in still more ways. If administrative leaders hope to hire persons from diverse backgrounds, then a diverse faculty represents an attractive environment in which others can develop and work. Another way that faculty diversity improves institutional quality is by contributing to the future-leadership pipeline. Almost all higher education administrators come from the faculty ranks. If the faculty is too homogenous, then the opportunities of diversity in leadership are too limited. The final rationale for encouraging faculty diversity is to provide role models from diverse backgrounds who function in faculty positions in all disciplines (Smith, 2009).

The first policy recommendation, diversifying the faculty, fulfills a vital aspiration of each higher education institution's central mission. The second policy recommendation addresses "identity in diversity and all of its complexities" (Smith, 2009, p. 178). Smith states: "One of the most compelling arguments for the importance of diversity has framed it as an educational opportunity for groups from different backgrounds to learn from and with one another" (p. 178). Watkins

and Gregory (2010) “explain this concept in terms of intergroup (recognition that individuals bring multiple and intersection identities) and inter-group (racial, religious, class, and sexuality issues that may be present with each gender) interaction” (p. 358).

There are a number of conditions that work well for bringing people from different backgrounds together. First, a key condition for achieving the benefits of intergroup interaction is equal status. Members of the intergroup must perceive and experience equality between minority and majority positions (Smith, 2009). Second, members of the intergroup must share goals. Athletics is the obvious example, but shared goals can be encouraged in other settings as well. Third, members of the intergroup must avoid competition and cooperate together toward achieving goals. The intergroup uses collaborate effort to accomplish its purposes. Fourth, members of the intergroup need institutional support. The institution’s customs, laws, leadership, and indisputable commitment help intergroups flourish. Smith indicates: “A living mission with respect to diversity is one vehicle for setting a tome of institutional support and intention:” (p. 180).

For the benefits of diversity to really flourish, students must be encouraged to think of the multiple groups with whom they identify and participate. This identification and participation in different groups allow students to develop relationships with people who may share common characteristics or interests as themselves; however, students discover that they do not share every characteristic or interest as the people in the multiple groups. Smith (2009) stresses: “Supporting a variety of identity groups and building their capacity to engage across identities can only facilitate communication, boundary-crossing, and the development of relationships that are so important today and so underdeveloped in most institutions” (p. 195).

Underscoring the importance of effective intergroup relations and identity leads to greater student success. Smith (2009) offers findings of Project DEEP (Documenting Effective Educational Practice) as key principles that can be drawn from the relationship between diversity and success. The mission statements of higher education institutions should articulate the following principles: a mission linked to student success, a focus on student learning, environments created for educational enrichment, clearly marked paths to student success, an improvement-oriented educational ethos, and shared responsibility for educational quality and student success (p. 205). Commitment to these qualities and refusal to use background characteristics as predictors of student success lead to a “good education that matters” (p. 226).

Other researchers add literature specifically to the educational benefits of diversity. Gurin et al. (2002) identify three levels of diversity: structural (the actual numerical representation of diverse groups), informal interactional diversity (intergroup interaction), and classroom diversity (content knowledge about diverse people). Gurin et al. concur with Smith (2009) that engagement between peers in informal environments and classrooms leads to the greatest post-secondary benefits. Gurin et al. link a wide variety of individual, institutional, and societal benefits of diversity that parallel those benefits articulated by Smith.

Some of the learning benefits include “active learning skills, intellectual engagement and motivation, and a variety of academic skills” ( Gurin et al., 2002, p. 334). Some of the democratic benefits include “perspective-taking, citizenship engagement, racial and cultural understanding, and judgment of the compatibility among different groups in a democracy” (Gurin et al.). These researchers suggest that the impact of diversity on these learning and democracy outcomes is especially important during the college years because students are at a unique times of personal and social identity (Erikson, as cited in Gurin et al.).

## SUMMARY

This article has provided an overview of the diversity issue and its importance not only to the welfare of those invested in higher education but also to the health and well-being of all people groups, nationally and globally. Research findings have revealed a need for immediate, faster change and for locating diversity in the center of institutional missions. Although higher education institutions have implemented some successful diversity initiatives, they are still building

institutional capacity as they go. As the traditions of critical theory reveal, campus leaders have many more barriers to overcome before equity becomes a reality for all students.

Of certain goals all concerned individuals can be confident: Higher education leaders must create campuses that function well in pluralistic societies, that educate effective leaders, that address and solve the critical issues facing society, and that provide models of thriving, diverse communities for the world.

## CONCLUSION

Continuing affirmative action and diversity efforts by higher education institutions not only allows more students access to a higher education, but these efforts encourage students' academic and social growth. On a self-interest note, affirmative action and diversity initiatives reduce the chances of terrible violence that often accompanies "unjust and inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities. . . . As Rothenberg (2008) emphasizes:

A society that distributes educational opportunities, housing, health care, food, even kindness, based on the color of people's skin and other arbitrary variables cannot guarantee the safety or security of its people. In this sense, all of us, both the victims and the beneficiaries of racism, pay a terrible price. (p. 3)

Clark (2004) reminds the majority group that there are many more minorities that have benefited from a college education than in the past. Further, diversity is intrinsic to almost every mission statement provided by higher education institutions. However, if campus populations are to be truly diversified, administrative leaders must understand that "diversity is simply liberty and justice for all" (para. 6).

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### **ALEXANDER JUN**

Alexander Jun, Ph.D., is a TED speaker and the author of *From Here to University: Access, Mobility, and Resilience Among Urban Latino Youth* (Routledge Press, 2001). He has published extensively on issues of postsecondary access for historically underrepresented students in underserved areas, and recently completed a three-year narrative inquiry research project on the educational mobility and academic resilience of Khmer orphans, which he's completing a book about. Jun conducts research on issues surrounding higher education globalization in the Pacific Rim, and while studying at the University of Southern California, he earned a Ford Foundation fellowship to conduct research on college preparation programs for urban youth. Jun teaches courses on diversity and social justice in higher education, comparative higher education, and qualitative research methods, and joined APU after 15 years as a faculty member and administrator at USC.